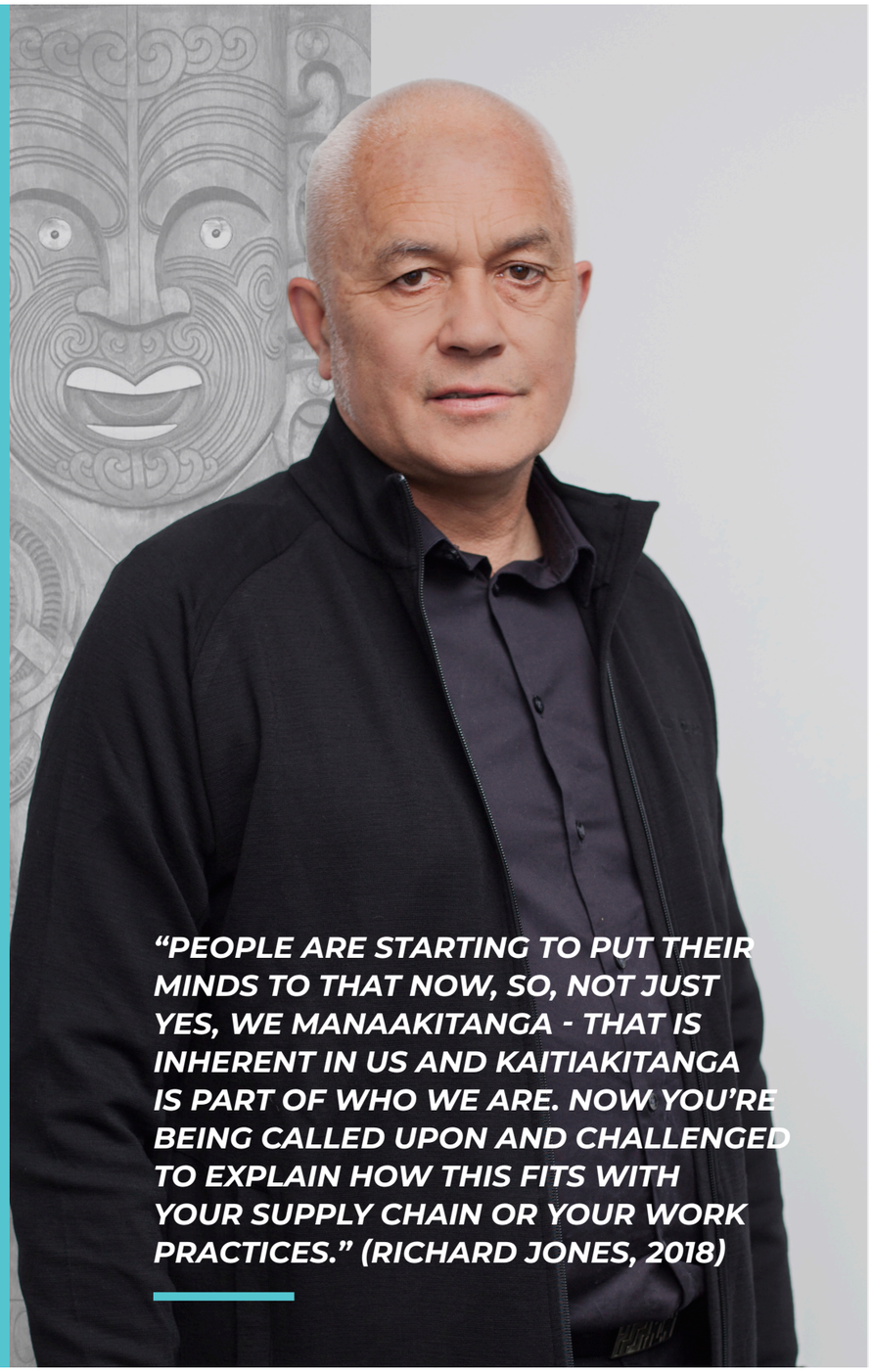


HELPING MĀORI BUSINESSES MOVE UP THE VALUE CHAIN' RICHARD JONES AND POUTAMA TRUST

STORYING KAITIAKITANGA: A KAUPAPA MĀORI LAND AND WATER FOOD STORY

Cover Image: Tai Tokerau Honey Collective



Richard Jones

HE KAUPAPA **INTRODUCTION**

How can Māori businesses be supported in their efforts to produce products that align with Māori cultural values while suiting the needs of national and international markets? Independent charitable trust, Poutama, provides business development services for Māori who seek to enhance their business ventures, and they have been doing so since 1988. Much of their activity centres on the food and beverage sector and includes products such as macadamia nuts, seafood, kina pate, Alpaca meat, hemp, medicinal food and medicinal cannabis. As Chief Experiences Officer, Richard Jones (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Whakaue, and Ngāti Pikiao) explains, Poutama works nationally and internationally, to encourage collaborations across the Māori and non-Māori business sector. Aspects of Poutama Trust’s work includes making sure that the values of te ao Māori are entwined with business development aspirations. Discussing a recent project underpinned by an explicit cultural assessment process, Richard notes:

> *[P]art of that assessment focused on things like kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga - how your values are infused in your business. Businesses were examined on those things and if you didn’t meet it, you’d get yourself up to standard or you weren’t able to be a part of the group. The core values that people had to come under include tiaki, then taiao, tangata, moana, whenua, manaaki, mana, tika, pono, being true, being honest, integrity.*

Recent Poutama initiatives include the Kawerau Diary initiative and the Poutama Cuisine Cluster (PCC), a collective of Māori food and beverage producers, including Cathy Taite-Jamieson’s BioFarm products. MIHI (Movers in Hemp Innovation) is a more recent project which explores the potential for a vertically integrated medicinal hemp and food production system and involves established hemp producer Kanapu Hemp Foods Ltd. and a range of existing Māori businesses and landowners. This season three hemp growing trials will take place in the Hawkes Bay and existing processing plants are exploring how to produce hemp milk and powder. By piggybacking off existing international markets and relationships, MIHI has the potential to diversify Māori land holdings and provide localised small business opportunities with scope to move product internationally.

Another network fostered by Poutama is the Poutama Honey Group (PHG), made up of Māori honey producers, land owners and investors who aim to foster sustainable land use practices, as well as enhance and extend the skills and resources of people. Richard describes this network as the Honey Whānau:

> *We brought a lot of the honey producers together and initially we were thinking that we could develop one single honey brand, but what we discovered was that most of those businesses had put a lot of time and effort into their own brands. So, the best thing that came out of it was an informal network where the honey businesses are talking to each other, and exchanging hive sites. They help each other out if someone’s short of something, one of them will come to their help. […] We haven’t got to a single brand yet but we’re still working on it. But at least we know we’ve got all this dedicated bunch of businesses that are happy to work with each other and exchange information and experiences and resources etc. […] During the season the honey flow will generally start up in the north and will come down central North Island and over to the East Coast. Those that chase the honey flow are able to secure sites in different parts of the country through this network. We would put that under whānaungatanga or collaboration - we call them the Honey Whānau because that’s what they are.*

Collaborations such as the Poutama Honey Group bring small businesses together to help build scale in order to better access international markets. Māori cultural values are a defining feature of Poutama’s development services. All collaborators, including non-Māori, must be aligned with these values. Māori cultural values also offer a point of difference on both national and international markets.

HE KAWA
COMMUNICATING MĀORI CULTURAL VALUES

A key aim of Poutama is to assist clients to "move up the value chain" which means to increase the efficiencies of production, enhance competitive advantage and deliver maximum value for the least possible total cost. According to Richard, it is very important that businesses communicate Māori cultural values as an integral part of their practice, as these values can help businesses stand out in a very crowded and competitive sector. As Richard notes, Māori values of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga are all part of the story for Māori businesses today, but these stories need to be backed up by actions and practices. Richard says, "We're all quite good at throwing out those terms - the tanga's as we call them - but its about being able to really back it up now …". Richard continues:

> *People are starting to put their minds to that now, so, not just yes, we manaakitanga - that is inherent in us and kaitiakitanga is part of who we are. Now you're being called upon and challenged to explain how this fits with your supply chain or your work practices. So, for our farms we have what we call Kaitiaki Premium. If people meet the Kaitiaki Premium, they will get extra for their milk per kilogram.*



Tuku Collective

Sustainable land-use practices, organics, renewable energies - these are all aspects of Poutama's vision to care for land, people and animals, but a vision underpinned by Māori cultural values. Richard admits that, at times, it is difficult to convey the depth of these cultural elements to an international audience.

> *It's quite hard to get it across exactly to a foreign buyer, say China. New Zealand's always part of that story. New Zealand is like a hook in your story because people will generally know about New Zealand. But they might not necessarily know about Māori or Taitokerau. So, you're using New Zealand as the entry point to start bringing people into your story and once you're bringing people in, they start to listen.*

Discussing the Asian markets, Richard suggests that the family-oriented systems of te ao Māori are very similar to the family values underpinning their Japanese collaborators.

> *Even with us with our Kawerau dairy project, we've got an offshore investor, it's a Japanese company. They're a family company, they're 140 years old. So, straight away they're kind of aligning with Māori values. They think long term, they think inter-generationally. […] When we were looking for an offshore investor, we didn't just want money, they had to bring other things into it as well. So, the Japanese brought their family values, their longevity plus they already had the connections in the market, which is probably almost as valuable as the money they put in to invest in it.*

Richard acknowledges there is also scope to build collaborations with other Indigenous businesses such as Canadian First Nations peoples.

ALTERNATE ECONOMIES OF VALUE

If one of the key aims of Poutama is to help clients "move up the value chain" the Trust has also been involved in projects that seek to increase the value of employment. That is to say, Poutama aims to provide opportunities for training, advancement in the work place and the development of higher skill sets. Discussing the Kawerau Diary farm project and its internship scheme, Richard comments:

> *[W]ith the dairy plant, we've got some interns now. What we say to them is that you might start off on the factory floor but one day you could be running this place. So, we're saying, there's a pathway here. You start off here but you can end up over there if you want to. So, that's been a big driver for our group, to get people into employment, some of whom have been long term unemployed or have been doing unskilled jobs where there's no possibility of advancement. So, that's been a real focus with us. We started off with internships. Our Japanese partner owns food processing plants here in New Zealand, so they are able to send people to work in those processing plants to get experience as to what it is like to be in a food processing plant. Now, we're working to get them into a primary industry training organisation programme where they come out with a dairy certification.*

In our kōrero with Richard Jones (Chief Experiences Officer), we hear the commitment of a kaitiaki of the Māori business sector and the imaginative and bold work that is being done, to uplift Māori economic and cultural interests.

POUTAMA

Paroa Station Hives

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See our website for more info on the Storying Kaitiakitanga project.

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[1] See https://poutama.co.nz/projects/cuisine/

[3] The Dairy plant aligns eleven Māori entities with a 137 year old family owned Japanese business called Imanaka, which is represented through Cedenco Dairy Ltd. The Māori entities include: Te Manawa o Tūhoe, Māori Investments, Pūtauaki Trust, Ngati Makino, Rotoiti 15, Tataiwhetu Lands Trust, Tapuika Holdings Ltd, Rotoma No.1 Inc, Wharepi Whanau Trust, Omataroa Rangitaiki No.2 Trust and Poutama.

MANAAKITIA TE TĀNGATA ME TE WHENUA E ORA AI TE IWI

LOOK AFTER THE PEOPLE, THE LAND AND THE CUSTOMERS

FOR FURTHER INFO CONTACT

Project Co-leader Jessica Hutchings

Email kiaora@jessicahutchings.org.nz

Project Co-leader Jo Smith

Email jo.smith@vuw.ac.nz

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